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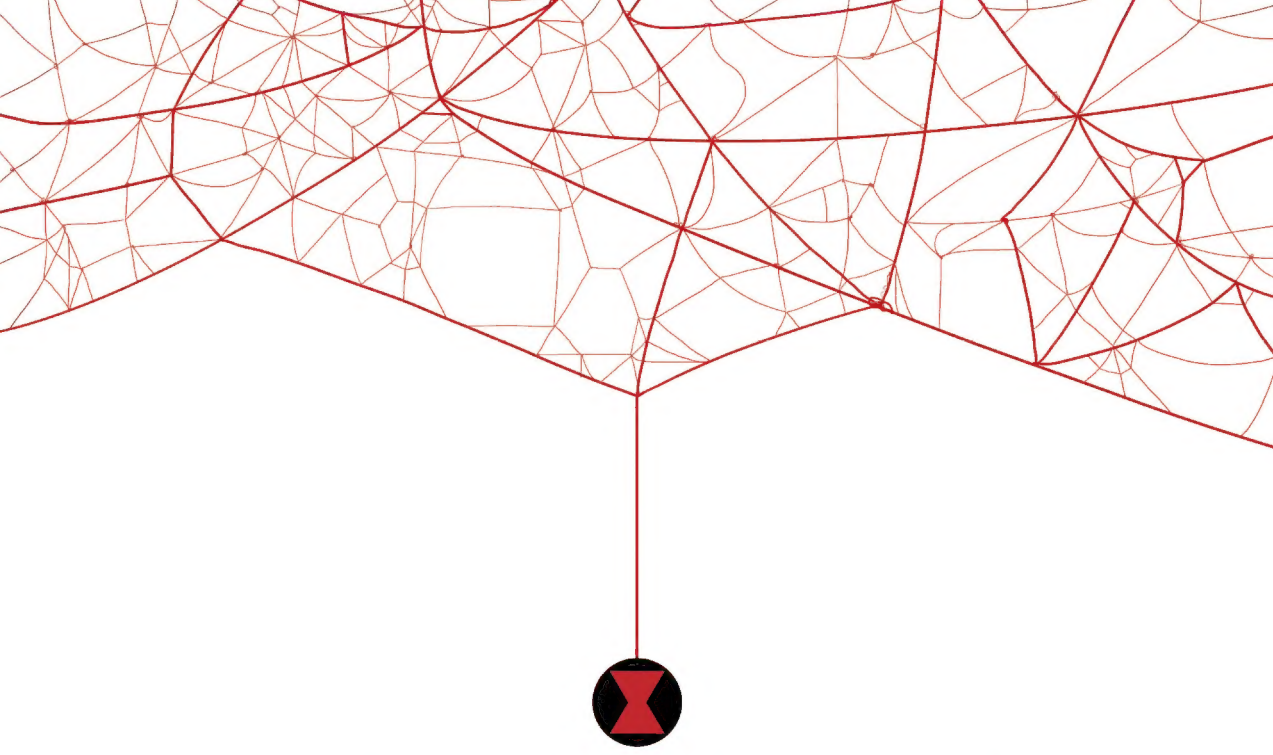

NATASHA ROMANOVA IS AN AVENGER, ~~AN AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D.~~ AND AN EX-KGB ASSASSIN, BUT ON HER OWN TIME SHE USES HER UNIQUE SKILL SET TO ATONE FOR HER PAST. SHE IS:

BLACK WIDOW

AFTER BRINGING DOWN THE INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST ORGANIZATION CHAOS, NATASHA QUIT S.H.I.E.L.D., REJOINED THE AVENGERS ON AN AS-NEEDED BASIS, AND PLANNED TO LIVE THE QUIET LIFE FOR A WHILE WITH HER CAT LIHO. BUT AS EARTHS COLLIDE AND THE END OF THE WORLD DRAWS NIGH, NATASHA IS ONCE AGAIN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO ERASE SOME OF THE RED IN HER LEDGER.

"JANUARY: PART ONE"

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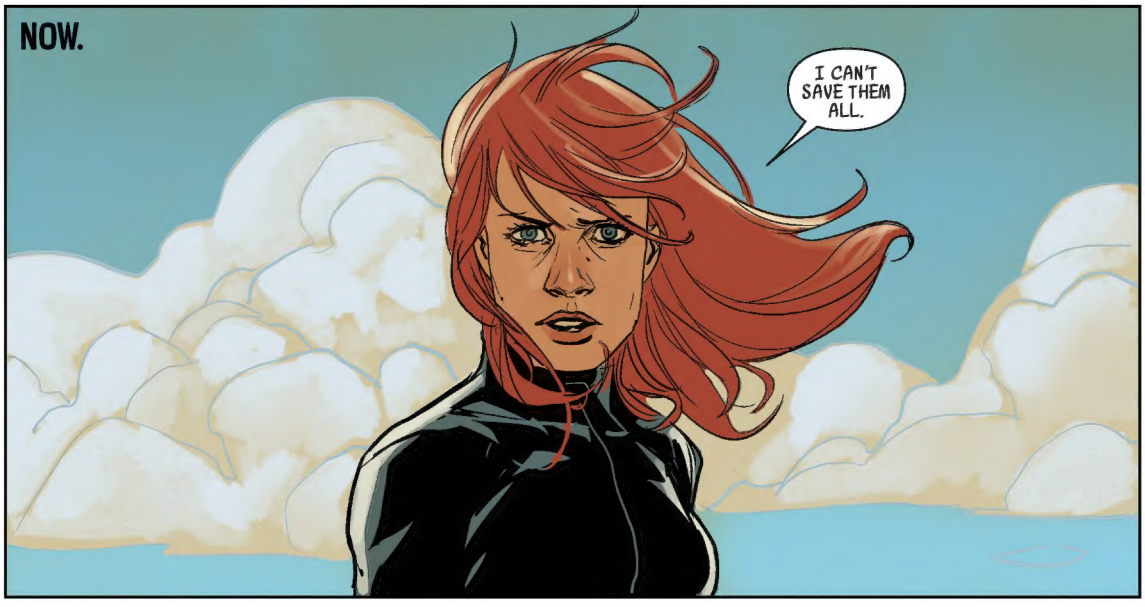
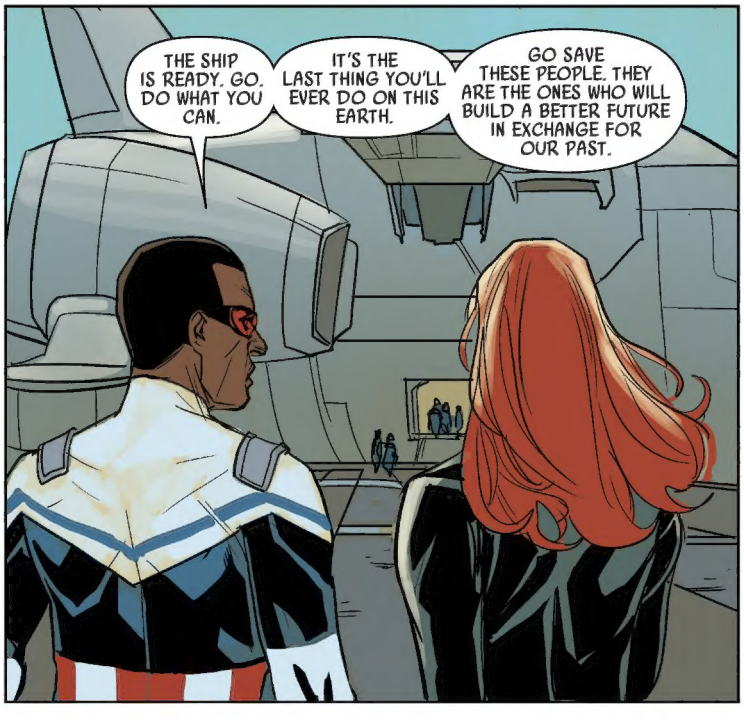

NOW.
I CAN'T SAVE THEM ALL.

WE COULD NEVER SAVE THEM ALL. THAT'S NEVER BEEN PART OF THE DEAL.
BUT SOME MUST BE SAVED. AND YOU'VE GOT TO SAVE THEM.

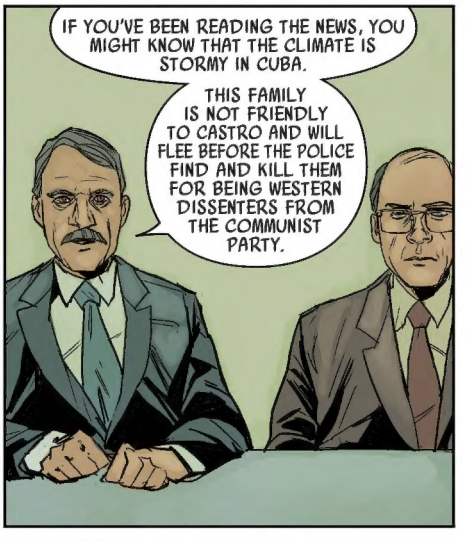

THE SHIP IS READY. GO. DO WHAT YOU CAN.
IT'S THE LAST THING YOU'LL EVER DO ON THIS EARTH.
GO SAVE THESE PEOPLE. THEY ARE THE ONES WHO WILL BUILD A BETTER FUTURE IN EXCHANGE FOR OUR PAST.

IF IT'S THE LAST THING I'LL DO ON EARTH...
...I'LL MAKE IT SOMETHING GOOD.

THEN.
THE RED ROOM.
GOOD MORNING, NATALIA ROMANOVA.

GOOD MORNING, GENTLEMEN.
WE HAVE MET.
THIS IS MISTER YULOV. YOU KNOW HIM?
YES, WE HAVE. I SPOKE TO YOUR CLASS. YOU WERE IMPRESSIVE. THE RED ROOM IS FORTUNATE TO HAVE YOU...
AND NOW MEANS TO *USE* YOU, NATALIA.

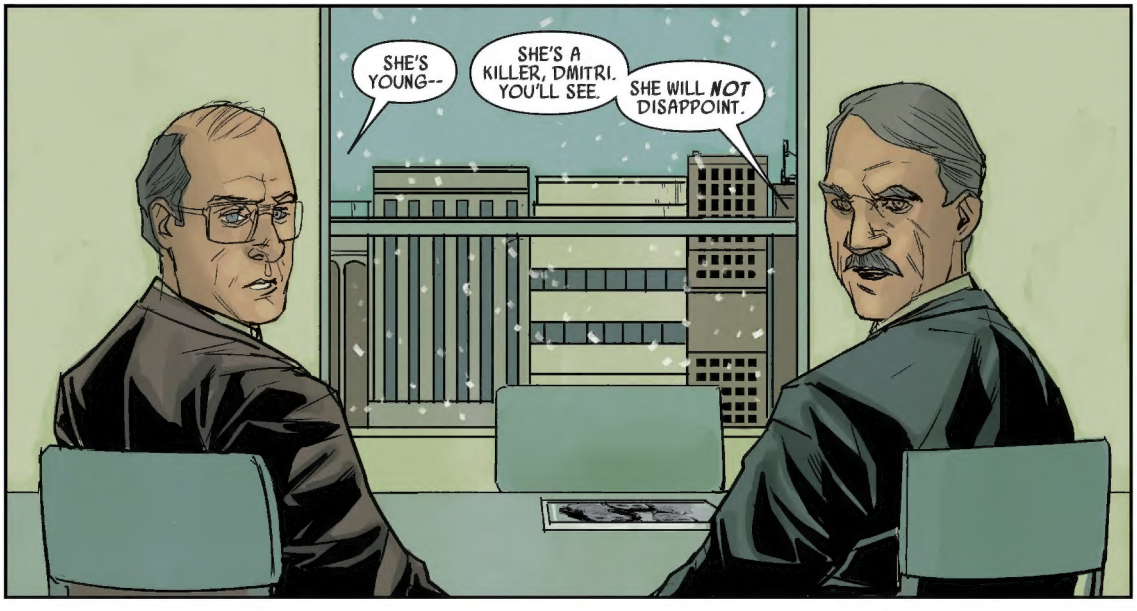
I SHALL BE YOUR CASE OFFICER.
AND THESE ARE?
THE COMIENZA FAMILY. THEY ARE THE MISSION.
THEY ARE IN CUBA. THEY MAY HAVE INFORMATION THAT IS HELPFUL TO MOSCOW.

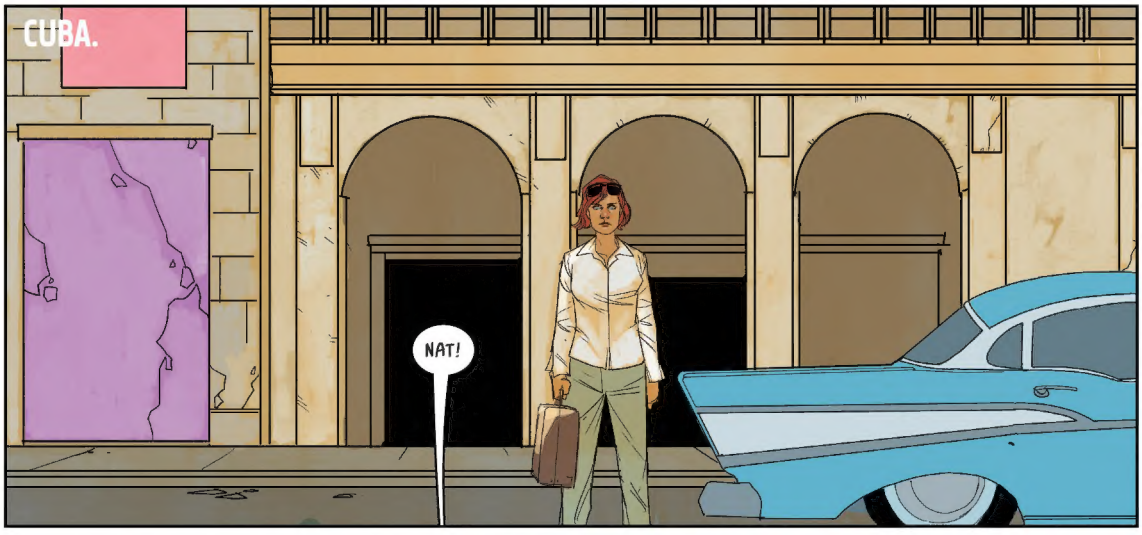

IF YOU'VE BEEN READING THE NEWS, YOU MIGHT KNOW THAT THE CLIMATE IS STORMY IN CUBA.
THIS FAMILY IS NOT FRIENDLY TO CASTRO AND WILL FLEE BEFORE THE POLICE FIND AND KILL THEM FOR BEING WESTERN DISSENTERS FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

MOSCOW ASKS THAT WE RETRIEVE THE FAMILY BEFORE THE WEST.

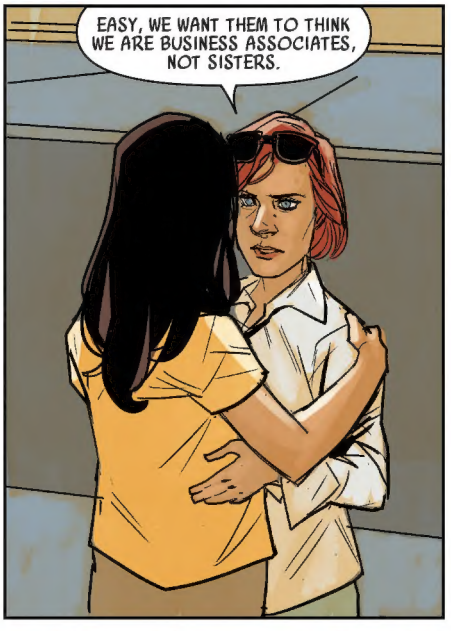
I HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN EXTRACTION AND DISGUISE, AS YOU ARE AWARE. I CAN HANDLE THIS.
YOU WILL HAVE HELP. YOUR CLASSMATE MARINA IS THERE ON THE GROUND.
SHE HAS CULTIVATED A FRIENDSHIP WITH THE COMIENZAS. SHE WILL INTRODUCE YOU AS A PERSON OF BUSINESS FROM RUSSIA WHO CAN BE VERY HELPFUL IN SOLVING PROBLEMS.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND, NATALIA?

I WON'T DISAPPOINT.


SHE'S YOUNG--
SHE'S A KILLER, DMITRI. YOU'LL SEE.
SHE WILL NOT DISAPPOINT.

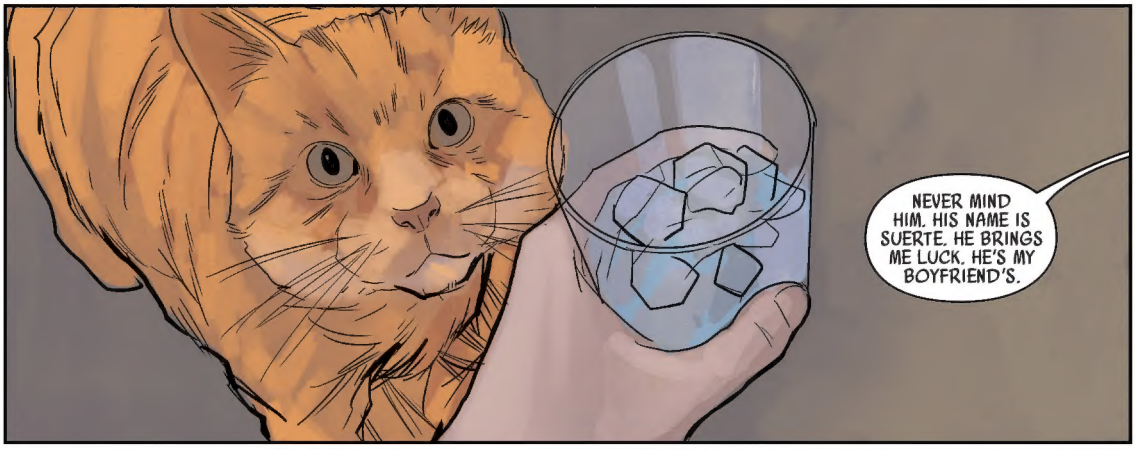

CUBA.
NAT!

HELLO, MARINA--


EASY, WE WANT THEM TO THINK WE ARE BUSINESS ASSOCIATES, NOT SISTERS.

I KNOW, BUT I HAVE MISSED YOU SO. I'M GLAD THAT YOU'RE HERE. COME ON, I HAVE SOME GINGER ALE UP IN THE APARTMENT.

TONIGHT, NAT, WE WILL MEET THE COMIENZAS. COME AND BE REFRESHED NOW. TELL ME OF HOME.


NEVER MIND HIM. HIS NAME IS SUERTE. HE BRINGS ME LUCK. HE'S MY BOYFRIEND'S.

DO YOU HAVE ALLERGIES?
NO, I LIKE CATS...
BOYFRIEND?
OH, HE'S JUST A COVER.

BUT WHY NOT ENJOY IT? HE'S HANDSOME, AT LEAST. AND THE CAT...
ANYWAY. WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING SINCE LAST OCTOBER?

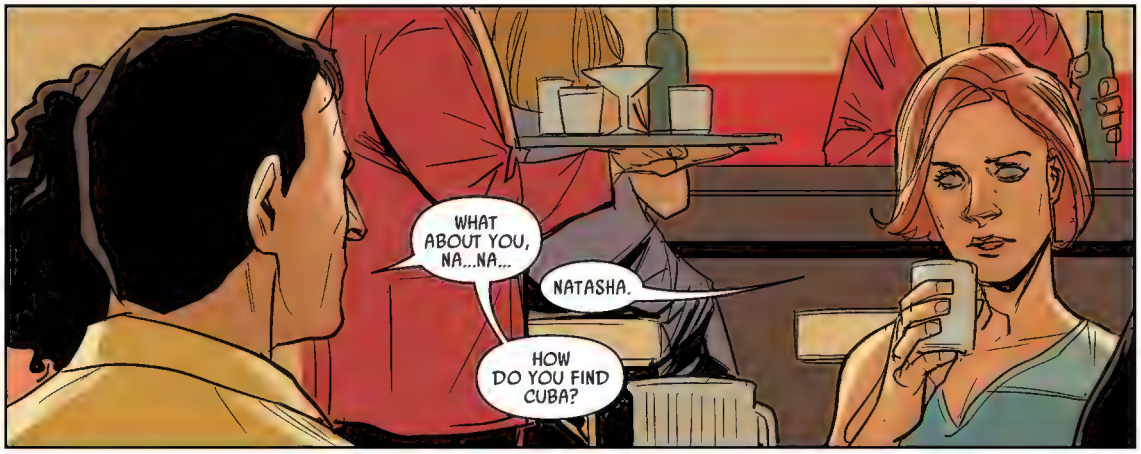
MOSTLY TRAINING. LEARNING LANGUAGES.
I DON'T THINK THEY KNEW WHAT TO DO WITH ME AT FIRST.

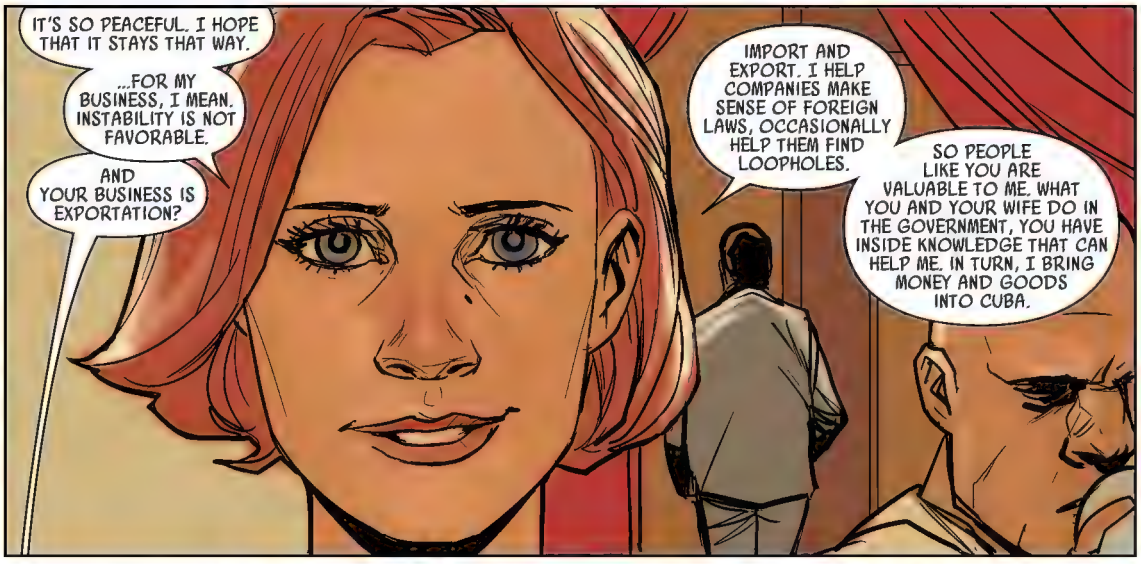
THE ROOM IS NOT EFFICIENT IN ALL THINGS, OF COURSE.
DEFINITELY NOT. OH, HEY--

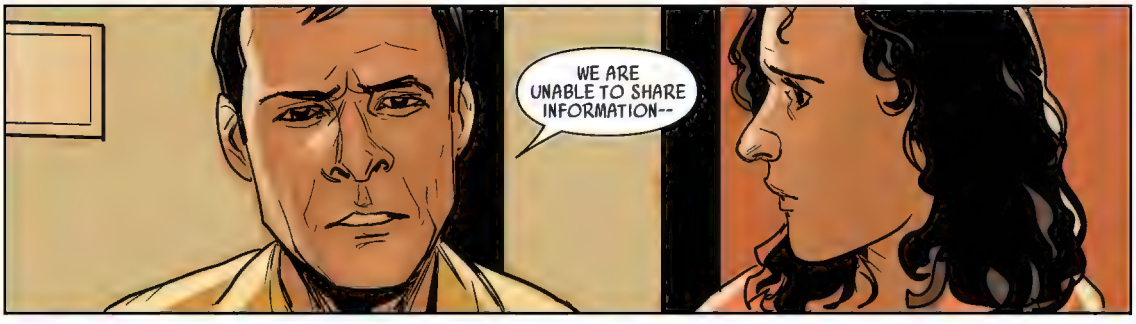
--FOLLOW ME. THIS APARTMENT IS LOUSY, AND FULL OF ROACHES, BUT--

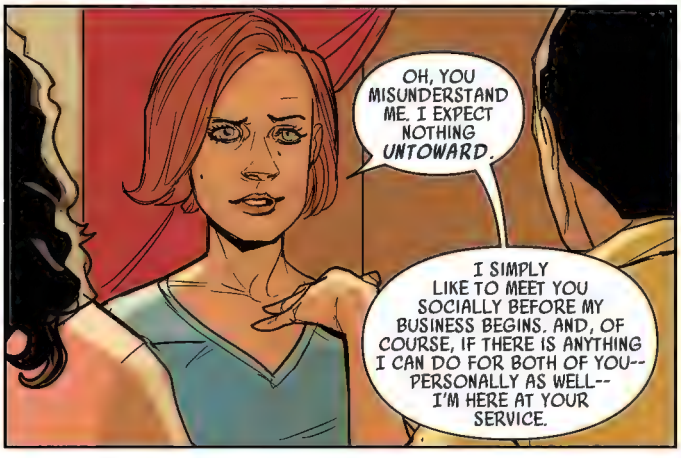
--IT DOES HAVE A VIEW.
WE MUST ADMIT, RUSSIA HAS NO VIEWS LIKE THIS, DOES IT?

RESTAURANTE BAR
Floridita
THIS IS A BUSY PLACE. EXCELLENT COCKTAILS.
I'VE MET THE COMIENZAS HERE TWICE BEFORE. OFTEN WE JUST GO TOGETHER TO THE MARKET.
YOU'VE TOLD THEM--
AS THE ROOM INSTRUCTED ME. YOU'VE INHERITED A SHIPPING BUSINESS FROM YOUR LATE HUSBAND. YOU HAVE EUROPEAN FRIENDS--
"--YOU COULD BE A GREAT HELP."
I IMAGINE MANY ARE AFRAID IN CUBA RIGHT NOW, PARTICULARLY IN THE CITY. EVEN A WHISPER OF DISSENT AND HERE COME THE POLICE...
INDEED. WE KNOW OF SEVERAL FAMILIES WHO WERE TAKEN RIGHT OUT OF THEIR HOMES, SIMPLY BECAUSE OTHERS REPORTED THEM AS REBELS.
OUR POSITION IS SAFE. JEMA AND I ARE FRIENDS OF CASTRO.
WE HAVE FAMILY HERE. PARENTS. COUSINS. IT IS HOME.
FAMILY IS ESSENTIAL. HOME IS IMPORTANT.
HOW ARE THINGS FOR YOUR CHILDREN? ARE THE SCHOOLS OKAY?
THE SCHOOLS ARE FINE. CASTRO'S GOVERNMENT IS VERY INTERESTED IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM. IT'S IMPORTANT TO HIM.

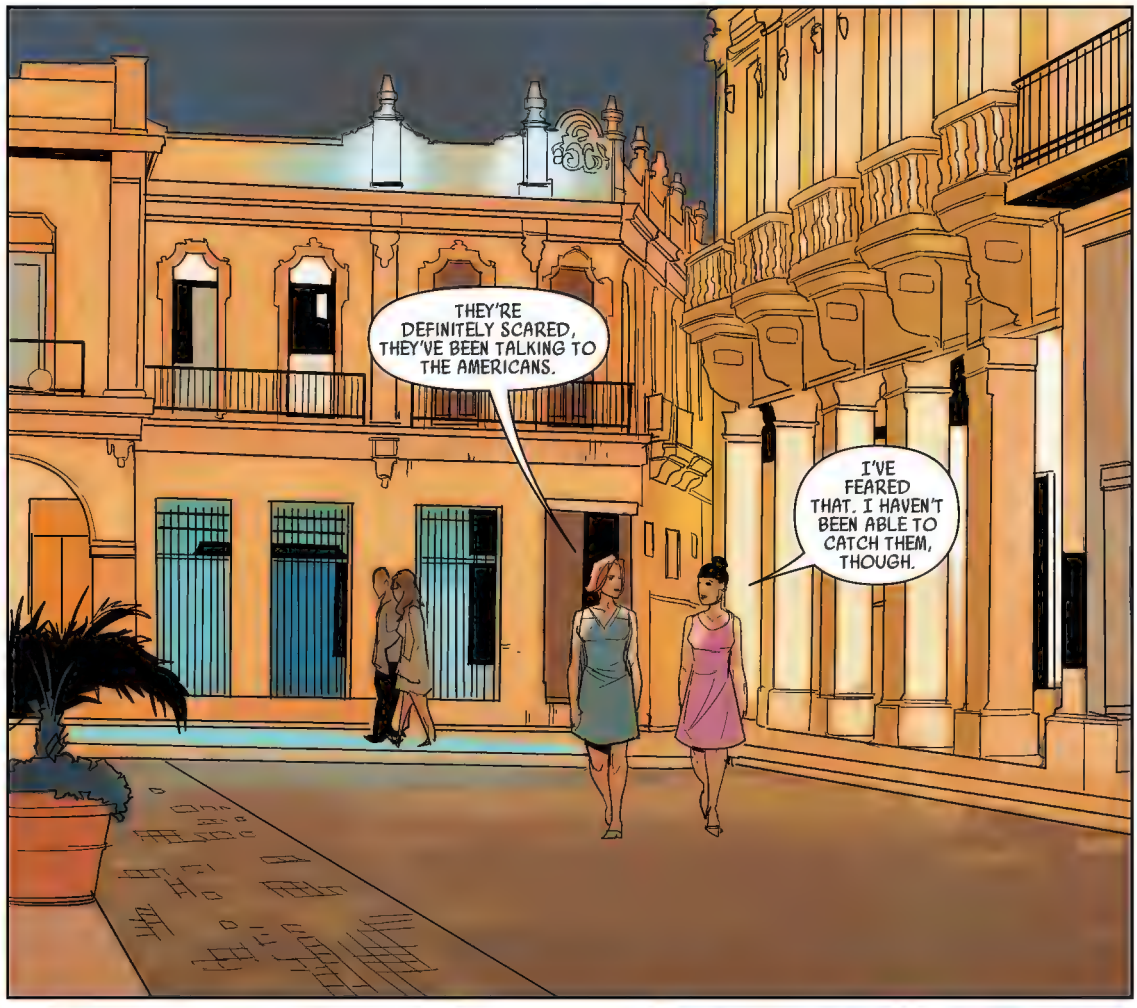

WHAT ABOUT YOU, NA...NA...
NATASHA.
HOW DO YOU FIND CUBA?

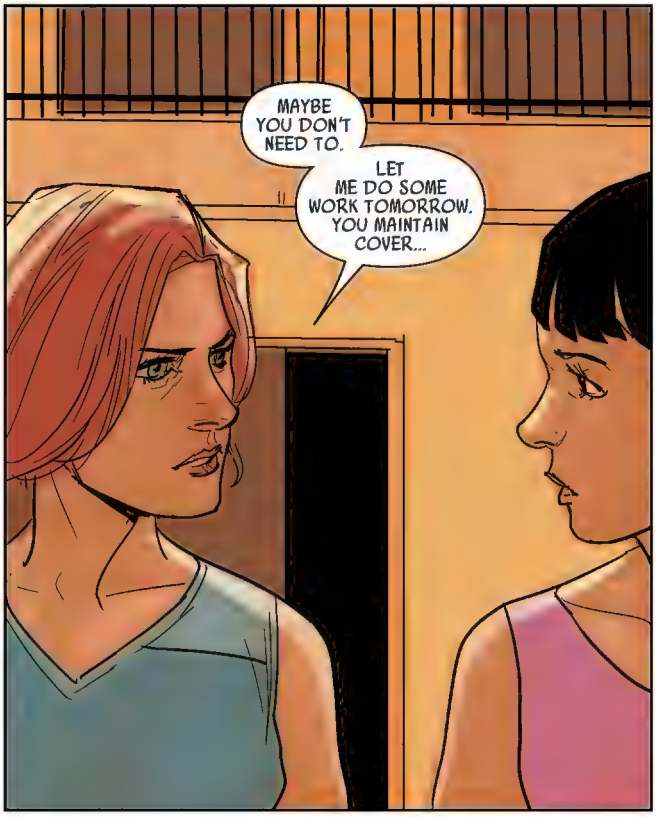

IT'S SO PEACEFUL. I HOPE THAT IT STAYS THAT WAY.
...FOR MY BUSINESS, I MEAN. INSTABILITY IS NOT FAVORABLE.
AND YOUR BUSINESS IS EXPORTATION?
IMPORT AND EXPORT. I HELP COMPANIES MAKE SENSE OF FOREIGN LAWS, OCCASIONALLY HELP THEM FIND LOOPHOLES.
SO PEOPLE LIKE YOU ARE VALUABLE TO ME. WHAT YOU AND YOUR WIFE DO IN THE GOVERNMENT, YOU HAVE INSIDE KNOWLEDGE THAT CAN HELP ME. IN TURN, I BRING MONEY AND GOODS INTO CUBA.

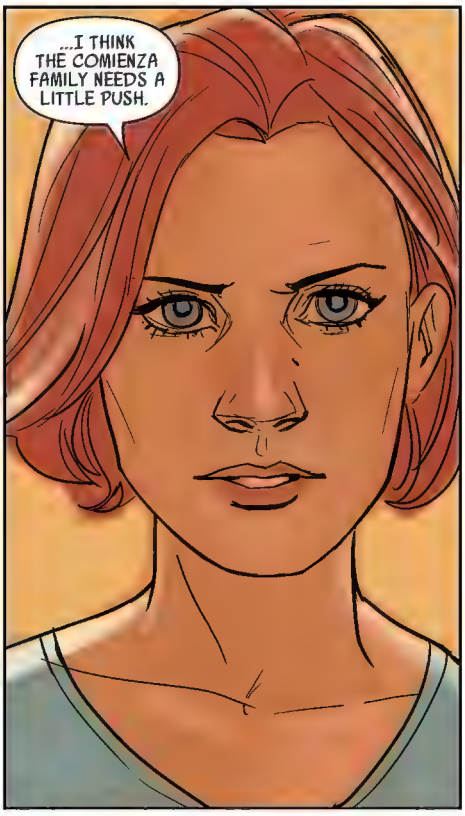

WE ARE UNABLE TO SHARE INFORMATION--

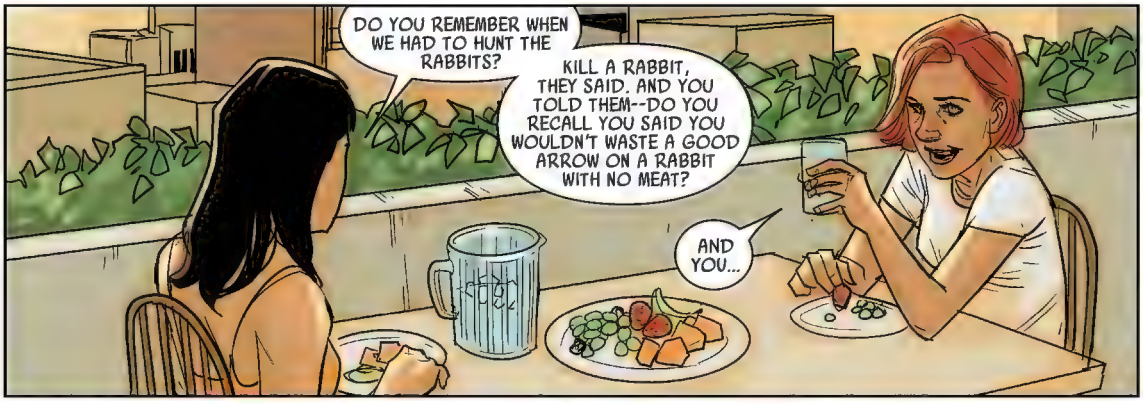

OH, YOU MISUNDERSTAND ME. I EXPECT NOTHING UNTOWARD.
I SIMPLY LIKE TO MEET YOU SOCIALLY BEFORE MY BUSINESS BEGINS. AND, OF COURSE, IF THERE IS ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR BOTH OF YOU--PERSONALLY AS WELL--I'M HERE AT YOUR SERVICE.

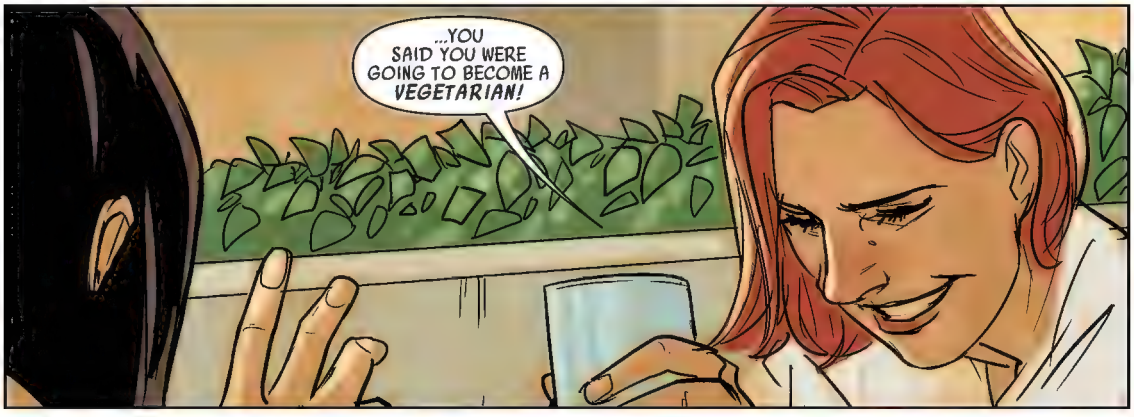
IT NEEDN'T ALL BE BUSINESS, RIGHT?


THEY'RE DEFINITELY SCARED, THEY'VE BEEN TALKING TO THE AMERICANS.
I'VE FEARED THAT. I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO CATCH THEM, THOUGH.

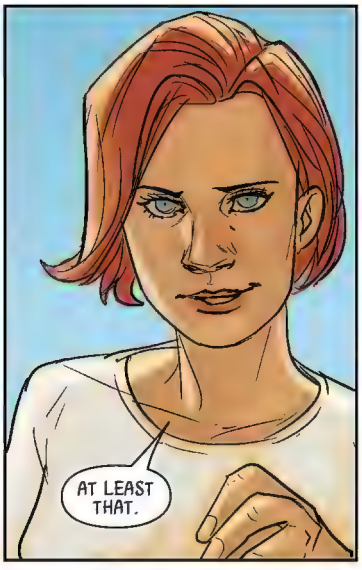

MAYBE YOU DON'T NEED TO.
LET ME DO SOME WORK TOMORROW. YOU MAINTAIN COVER...

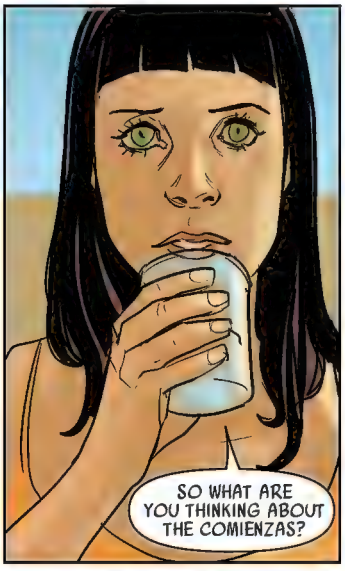

...I THINK THE COMIENZA FAMILY NEEDS A LITTLE PUSH.

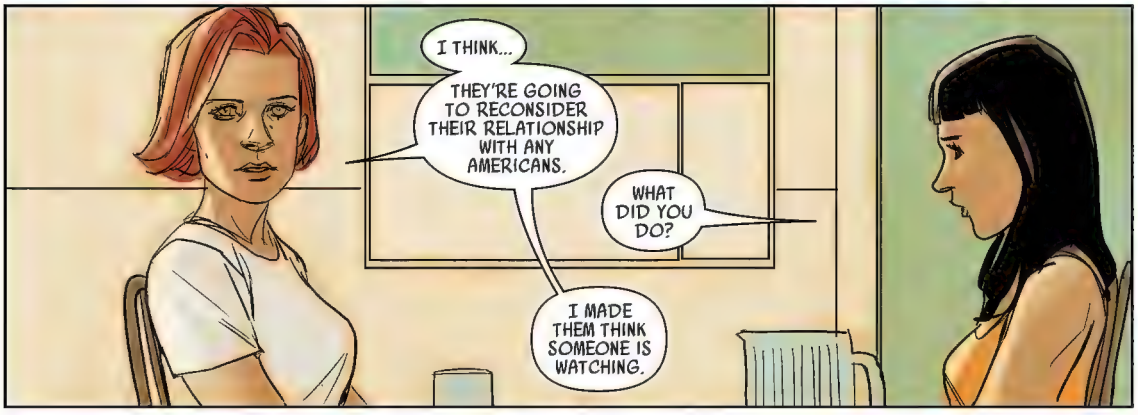

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN WE HAD TO HUNT THE RABBITS?
KILL A RABBIT, THEY SAID. AND YOU TOLD THEM--DO YOU RECALL YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T WASTE A GOOD ARROW ON A RABBIT WITH NO MEAT?
AND YOU...


...YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING TO BECOME A VEGETARIAN!

THE RED ROOM WASN'T ALL BAD.
AT LEAST WE FOUND ONE ANOTHER THERE.


AT LEAST THAT.


SO WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT THE COMIENZAS?


I THINK...
THEY'RE GOING TO RECONSIDER THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH ANY AMERICANS.
WHAT DID YOU DO?
I MADE THEM THINK SOMEONE IS WATCHING.

THE COMIENZAS' HOUSE.

DEADLY SPIDERS.
I'M TOLD THEY EXPERIMENTED ON BLACK WIDOW SPIDERS IN CUBA, GOING BACK TWO DECADES AGO.
WHAT DID THEY LEARN?
I CANNOT SAY WHAT ANYONE COULD LEARN FROM A SPIDER EXCEPT THAT IT'S DEADLY.
SCIENCE DIVISION...I NEVER UNDERSTAND ANYTHING THEY DO.

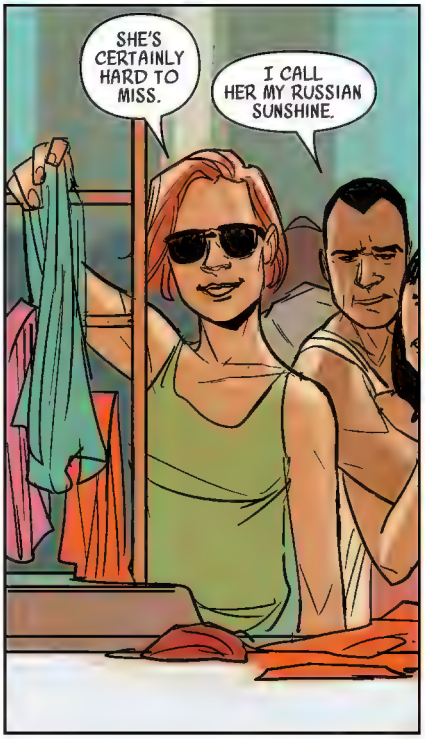
I ARRIVED THIS MORNING. IT'S DAMNED HOT HERE. LIKE HELL.
TELL ME ABOUT THE COMIENZAS.
THEY ARE VERY NERVOUS. I DON'T THINK THEY SEE MARINA AS SOMEONE TO TRUST. I DON'T HAVE TIME TO CULTIVATE TRUST MYSELF.
SO THE BEST OPTION IS TO MAKE THEM DESPERATE.
IT'S IMPORTANT THAT THEY FEEL THEY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO TRUST YOU.
BEFORE CASTRO BECOMES AWARE OF THEM.
OF COURSE, SIR.
AND MARINA?
WHAT ABOUT HER?
HAS SHE PERFORMED WELL?
IT SEEMS SO. SHE HAS EMBRACED HER COVER. SHE IS STILL SHARP.
SHE'S READY FOR THE NEXT STEP.
GOOD.
WE NEED TO MOVE QUICKLY.
ARE YOU MOVING THE TIMELINE UP?
YES, SIR.
YES. BE READY BY THIS WEEKEND.

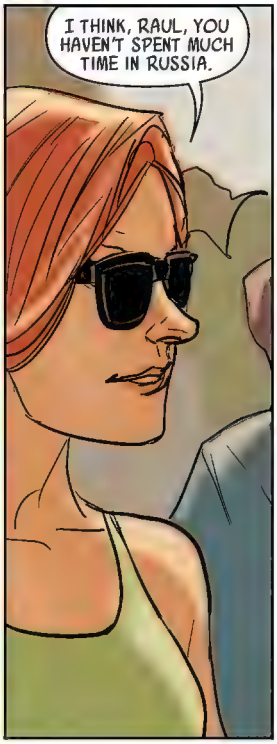
NAT, YOU MUSTN'T LEAVE WITHOUT ONE OF THESE ISLAND SCARVES. THEY'RE SO COLORFUL.
NOT LIKE A BABUSHKA.

THIS COLOR WILL LOOK GOOD WITH YOUR HAIR.
YOU KNOW I'M NOT SO FASHIONABLE, MARINA.
BUT YOU CAN BE.

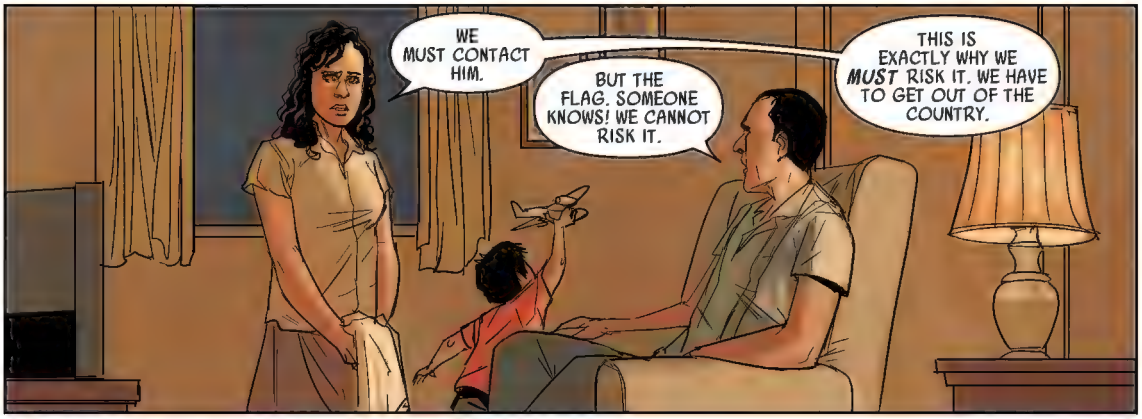
SO, RAUL?
YES.
HOW DID YOU MEET MARINA?
WE MET HERE IN THIS MARKET. I THINK THIS IS WHY SHE LIKES TO COME BACK HERE SO OFTEN.

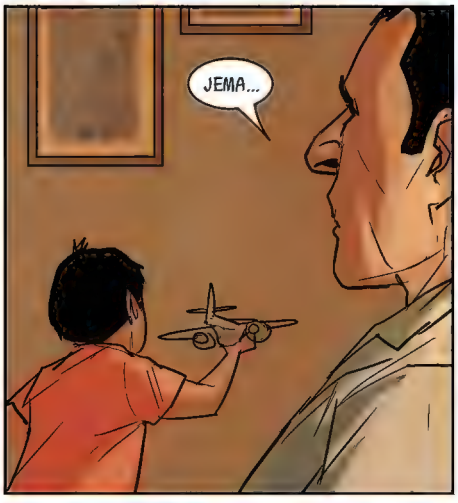
SHE WAS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE CUBAN GIRLS.
YOU FLATTER ME OVERMUCH, RAUL.


SHE'S CERTAINLY HARD TO MISS.
I CALL HER MY RUSSIAN SUNSHINE.


I THINK, RAUL, YOU HAVEN'T SPENT MUCH TIME IN RUSSIA.

NOT MUCH SUNSHINE.
OH!
OH, JEMA, HELLO! WHAT CHANCE RUNNING INTO YOU HERE.
YOU REMEMBER NATASHA, SHE--
HELLO, MARINA. I'M SORRY... I'M--
WE REALLY MUST BE GOING.
BE A DEAR AND GET US SOME FRUIT WATER.
WE GAVE THEM THE CHANCE. THEY'RE PREOCCUPIED.
THEY'RE DESPERATE.
BUT...
...THEY'RE NOT NEARLY DESPERATE ENOUGH.


WE MUST CONTACT HIM.
BUT THE FLAG. SOMEONE KNOWS! WE CANNOT RISK IT.
THIS IS EXACTLY WHY WE *MUST* RISK IT. WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF THE COUNTRY.


JEMA...

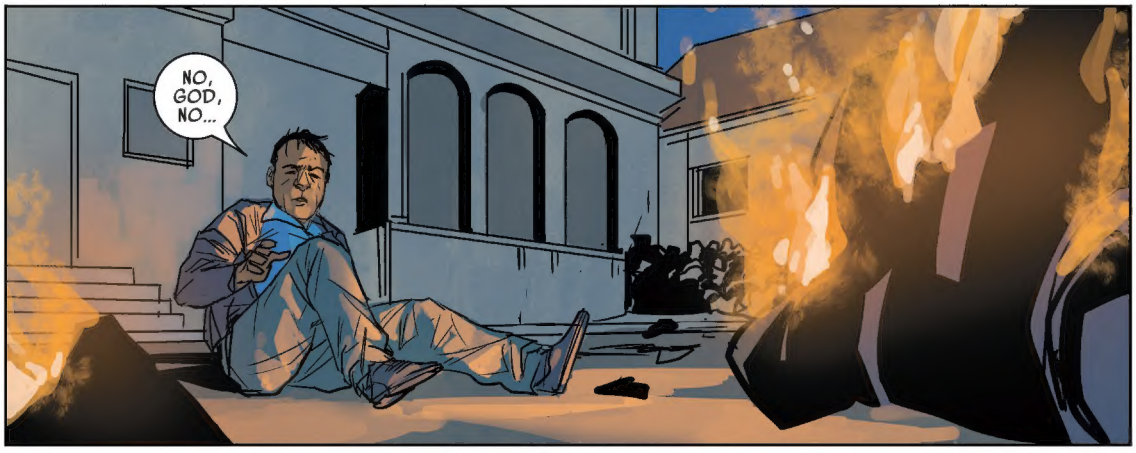
WE MUST. WE MUST RISK IT. IT'S NOT JUST US.
IT'S THE FUTURE, JOSÉ.

YOU'RE RIGHT. WE MUST RISK IT. I WILL PUT OUT THE SIGNAL.

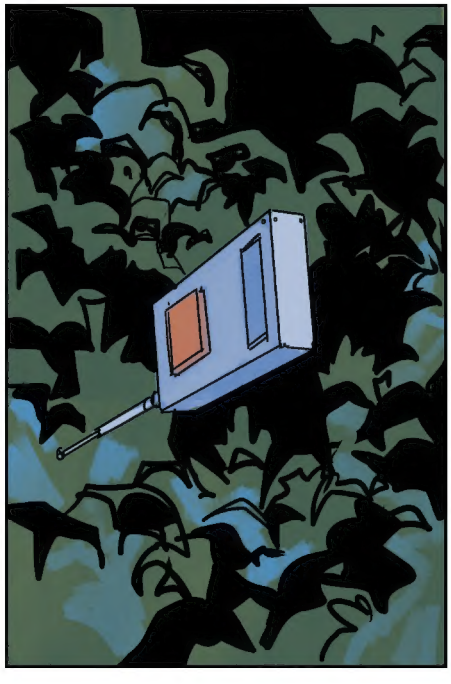
25

PUT EMILIANO TO BED.
I'LL STAY UP AND WAIT FOR HIM.

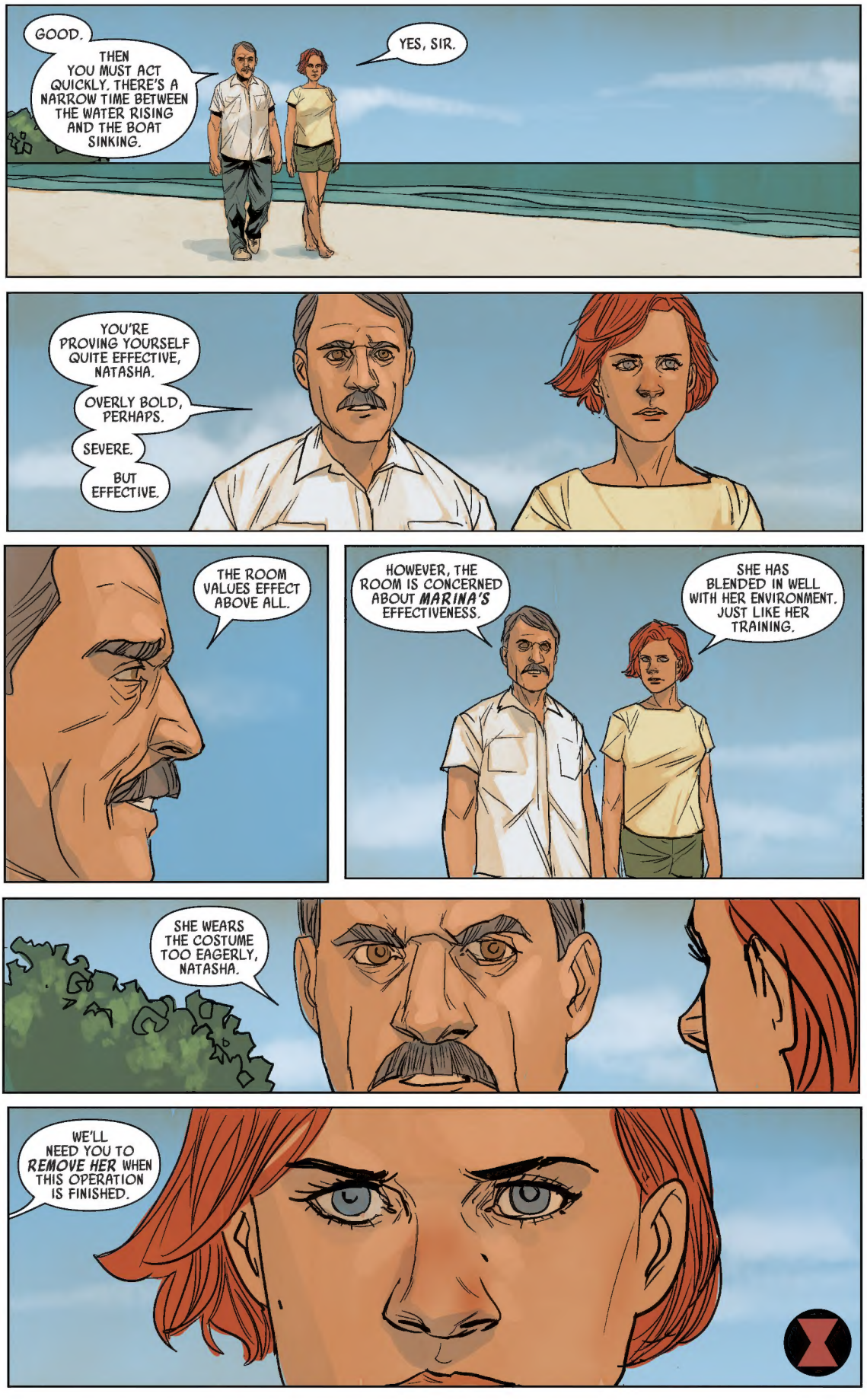
BOOM


NO, GOD, NO...

OH, NO...



"THEY'RE DESPERATE NOW.
"THEIR ESCAPE BOAT IS SECRET."


GOOD.
THEN YOU MUST ACT QUICKLY. THERE'S A NARROW TIME BETWEEN THE WATER RISING AND THE BOAT SINKING.
YES, SIR.
YOU'RE PROVING YOURSELF QUITE EFFECTIVE, NATASHA.
OVERLY BOLD, PERHAPS.
SEVERE.
BUT EFFECTIVE.
THE ROOM VALUES EFFECT ABOVE ALL.
HOWEVER, THE ROOM IS CONCERNED ABOUT MARINA'S EFFECTIVENESS.
SHE HAS BLENDED IN WELL WITH HER ENVIRONMENT. JUST LIKE HER TRAINING.
SHE WEARS THE COSTUME TOO EAGERLY, NATASHA.
WE'LL NEED YOU TO REMOVE HER WHEN THIS OPERATION IS FINISHED.